

## **Flickering Lights and Fractures by GreenLily474**

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**Summary:** The Party member from Hawkins visit Will and Eleven in Pawnee for Christmas break in 1986. They want to repair their friendship, but the Upside Down and the people who want to re-open the gate get in the way.

# 1. Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Surprises

"Guys, Steve's going to give me a ride to Pawnee tomorrow. I've got some stuff to finish up with my research project," said Dustin to Mike and Lucas as they left Kaminski's final.

"So we'll be safe from your potent farts in Nancy's car," Lucas snickered.

"Classic he who smelt it, delt it," said Dustin. "You fart way more than I do."

"He's right, you know," said Max as she walked up behind Lucas, wrapped her arms around him and put her chin on his shoulder.

"Hey, you're supposed to be on my side," Lucas protested.

"I'm on the side of the truth!" said Max with a grin.

"Hey, Mike," said Jennifer Hayes, a girl who had cried at Will's funeral. She was with her friend Julie Mason, a girl Will had danced with at the Snow Ball two years earlier.

"Hey, Jennifer. What's up?" asked Mike.

"You're visiting Will Byers over the break, right?"

"Yep," said Mike.

"Tell him we said 'hi,' okay?"

"Sure, no problem," said Mike. The girls walked away and Mike muttered "If he decides to actually grace us with his presence."

"Is this about Thanksgiving again?" asked Dustin.

"We were all going to see Star Trek IV, and he just bailed at the last minute because he suddenly had plans with his new and *cooler* friends!" said Mike.

"Maybe coming back to Hawkins brings up a lot of bad memories for him," said Lucas.

"Yeah, people did kind of write him off as a freak here... with the exception of a few girls who seemed to dig that chronically shy routine of his," said Dustin as he indicated Jennifer and Julie who were walking out the doors. "Do you really blame him for not wanting to come back here very often?"

"El had a lot of bad things happen and she still comes back as much as she can," said Mike.

"Yeah, and every time they both come back, you always spend all your time with El," said Dustin.

"So you're saying he's jealous?" asked Mike.

"Not at all," said Dustin. "You pouting about Will hanging with his new friends is jealousy. Will's feeling a little left out and maybe even a bit annoyed. I know because I felt the same way."

"Are you saying it's El's fault?" asked Mike.

"No, Dingus!" said Dustin as he used Robin's favorite insult. "I'm saying that you can't find the balance between your best friend and your girlfriend. And you're mad at Will because he doesn't want to sit and patiently wait his turn to hang out with you. Will doesn't blame El either, by the way. He never did. Unlike you two, he was never a dick to El or Max."

"You're right," said Mike. "It's just..."

"You miss him," said Dustin. "We all do."

"Yeah," said Mike. He remembered the day the Byers family had moved away. Mike had turned to look at the house he had spent so much time in as a kid that he would never enter again. He started wishing that he'd said more to Will before he left. "Do you think you'll get there in time to help us set up that model of Minas Tirith. You could distract him while we set it up."

"I'll try," said Dustin. "Maybe Will would like it better if we all build it

together, like the stuff we used to do."

"That would ruin the surprise!" said Lucas.

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"I'm telling you, Will," said Josie as they walked out of their art final. "Graffiti will be considered the great art of our time 100 years from now."

"I think you could be right," said Will. "Mrs. Pillner obviously disagrees, though."

"Mrs. Pillner is part of the fascist conformist society that tried to dictate what everyone's supposed to be. You know, the one that conditioned you to believe that girls couldn't play video games, go to science camp, play D&D or like Lord of the Rings, X-Men, and Star Wars."

"I can admit when I'm wrong," said Will.

"That's why you were able to break free of that conditioning," said Josie.

Will noticed a group of kids he considered to be assholes following El and taunting her. He quickened his pace to confront them. Some of the kids in school made fun of her because she sometime struggled to speak.

"Hey, leave her alone!" said Will.

"Aw, Byers, coming to the rescue of your retarded sister again?" asked Rick Vernon.

"She does better than you in every class, Vernon," said Will. "She actually passes. You have no right to call El or anyone else a retard."

Rick glared at Will before jerking his head at his friends and walking away. El muttered a quick 'thanks' to Will before running into the girls bathroom.

"I'll talk to her," said Josie.

"Thanks," said Will as he began to get his things from his locker. Will had gotten past the point of being bothered by the cruel remarks of other people when he left Hawkins. It helped that he was in a new town where people didn't know his story and weren't staring at him wherever he went. He was trying to help El reach that point as well, but it was something she would have to decide for herself.

Josie entered the bathroom and saw El sitting on the floor. She took a seat next to her.

"Hey, don't listen to Rick, he's an asshole."

"I-I'm not smart like Will or you. You're in all the smart classes and you can draw."

"You may not be smart in the same way that we are, but you're still smart," said Josie. "Will thinks you're really smart."

"He's just saying that because he's nice," said El.

"He's nice, but he's not a liar," said Josie. "He said you're really good at figuring things out. High School doesn't exactly recognize being smart like that. High School sucks because too many guys like Rick have too much power. College will be way better, you'll see. You can be yourself more because people like Rick have way less power there."

"Be myself," said El. "That's what Max always said."

"She sounds awesome," said Josie. "I can't wait to meet her."

"You'll like her and she'll like you."

"Great," said Josie. "Now let's get out of here. Christmas break is starting."

The girls grabbed their stuff from their lockers and met Will at the entrance. He was shaking his head as a couple guys from the track team were trying to talk him into joining. Will had surprised a lot of people by doing well in his gym classes. No one in Pawnee knew how he'd once managed to outrun a demogorgan. No one in the new town even knew what a demogorgan was.

"Sorry, Will," said El as they stood there waiting for Jonathan, who had just returned from college for his own break, to pick them up.

"There's nothing for you to be sorry for," said Will as he squeezed her shoulder.

"I let them get to me again."

"You felt the way you felt, El. I'm not going to try to tell you how to feel, but I will say that guys like Rick suck and they aren't worth your time."

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"If you cooperate, Chief Hopper, the Byers family gets to live," said Dr. Brenner.

"What good is your word?" asked Hopper with a laugh. "You've sold out your entire country. Hell, you've sold out this entire dimension."

"A small mind like yours couldn't possibly understand my work," said Brenner.

"The girl losing her powers is... disappointing... but the boy, the boy could still be of use."

"Leave him alone! Leave both of them alone!" said Hopper as he struggled against his restraints before Brenner nodded to a Russian guard who gave Hopper an injection that knocked him unconscious.

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"El, what are you doing?" asked Will as he walked past her room and saw her concentrating on the clean clothes in her laundry basket.

"Nothing, I just thought it might be cool if I could show everyone I had my powers back when they visit."

"El, your powers were never what made you special," said Will as he walked into her room and sat at her desk.

"Then what makes me special, Will? Because I haven't felt special

since I lost them. I've just been helpless and useless like...like.."

"Like me?" asked Will.

"No, no, you're not helpless or useless, Will. That's not what I meant," said El.

"I have felt pretty helpless and useless sometimes, El, and you're the one that showed me I was wrong. You didn't use your powers to get me out of that rut either. There's also the fact that you were tortured and manipulated by a psychotic mad scientist for the first twelve years of your life and still ended up being a good person who wanted to save people. That makes you pretty extraordinary in my book."

"Thanks, Will," said El.

"You have saved my life more than once," said Will. "The least I can do is remind you that you are an awesome person once in a while."

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Mike had asked to see some of Will's most recent drawing while El, Lucas and Max ran out to the station wagon to grab the pieces for the Minas Tirith model to take them to the Rec Room. He noticed that Will was mostly drawing scenes from nature and around town rather than scenes from his own imagination.

"These are really good," said Mike. "I kind of miss the dragons and wizards you used to draw though."

Will shrugged. "Those things just aren't in my head as much as they used to be."

"Oh," said Mike. "Well, El said you've really been there for her since you guys moved her."

"She's been there for me too," said Will. "We got along pretty well once we actually got a chance to know each other."

Mike felt a small sting at Will's words and a bit annoyed. "So you don't think she's some stupid girl that I swap spit with anymore?"

Mike thought he saw Will glare at him for a moment. "I never actually thought that she was stupid, you know. I was just pissed at you and Lucas when I said that. It's too bad Max and El never joined us on the campaigns. That may have been fun."

"You think girls could have played D&D?"

"I do now."

"Maybe we could have a campaign this week," said Mike.

"Do you bring your D&D stuff?"

"No."

"I don't have mine anymore. So we'll have to figure out something else," said Will.

"I'm sure we will," said Mike.

"Hey, Mike," said Lucas as he came into Will's room. "That couples game we were talking about earlier, it's ready for us to start playing."

"Couples game?" asked Will.

"Yeah, we've been planning it for weeks," said Mike. "Sorry, Will, couples only."

Will's expression was unreadable. "Don't worry about it. I'll just do some reading," he said as he picked up a copy of *Different Seasons* and sat on his bed.

Mike and Lucas headed down the hall to the entrance of the basement where Max and El stood.

"Seriously?" Max hissed. "Couples only?"

"It worked, didn't it?" said Mike as he closed the door to the basement.

"Look, I just know how I felt when you said 'party members only' and I don't want Will to feel that way," said Max.



"He'll understand when we're finished, don't worry," said Lucas.

"I'm just saying, maybe Dustin was right. Will might like this better if he was building it with us. Isn't the whole point of coming here to spend time with him and El?" asked Max.

"Of course it is, but we've been planning this surprise for months," said Mike. "Shit, this looks more complicated than I thought."

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Will sat on his bed reading his book. He had decided over a year earlier that he wasn't going to let the fact that his friends wanted to spend time with their girlfriends bother him anymore.

Will remembered sitting in the passenger side of Jonathan's car and crying the entire trip. He suddenly stopped when they got to their new home. He had felt a weight lifted off his shoulders when he realized that he was free of Hawkins- a town full of people who saw him as a freak and "Zombie Boy." Sure, he missed his friends, but they had all moved on while he recovered from being trapped in the Upside Down and being possessed by the Mind Flayer (for the last part of 1983 to the earliest part of 1985, Will hadn't even been allowed to ride his bike around town with his friends).

Jonathan and Nancy were out and Dustin was coming in later. Will wished that Mike and Lucas had told him about their couples only game before Jonathan and Nancy left to go to a party at the community college campus. He really missed his brother (who had left for college a few months earlier) and wanted to spend time with him.

Will also wanted to spend time with Max and get to know her better. He and El had become close after leaving Hawkins and Will imagined that he and Max could have become close as well.

Will hadn't gone with El and Jonathan the last couple times they'd gone to Hawkins. He didn't like how the people there stared at him all the time. Mike had always been more interested in spending time with El on their visits. Will had come to accept that, but if it was going to be the case, he just preferred not going back to Hawkins at

all.

The phone rang and Will picked it up.

*"Hey," said Josie. "I just got talked into a shift of gift wrapping for the Boys and Girls club tonight. Can you help? I know your friends from Hawkins are in town, but I don't know anyone else working that shift. Maybe El and the others'll want to help too."*

"I can ask them," said Will. "Hang on." Will placed the phone on his night table and went down the hall to the basement door and knocked. Unfortunately, at that moment, Mike and the others were experiencing some frustration with the model they were building.

"WHAT?" Mike shouted from behind the closed door.

"Sorry," said Will. "I was just seeing if you guys wanted to-"

"We're still in the middle of the game," said Lucas.

"Well, it's just-" said Will.

"Will, can you please let us finish the game," said Mike.

"Yeah, no problem," said Will. *"Screw it,"* he muttered and went back to his room. He picked up the phone. "It's just going to be me, Josie. I'll walk to your place."

*"Will, are you alright?"*

"I'm fine. I'll see you in a couple minutes." Will scribbled a note for Dustin and taped it to the front door before putting on his jacket and heading over to Josie's house.

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Dustin was dropped off by Steve and Robin, who were on their way to a party in town. He saw a note with his name taped to the front door where Will explained that he had gone to volunteer to wrap Christmas presents and the others were in the basement playing some sort of couples game.

He went to the basement door and knocked.

"We're not done with the game yet, Will," Mike called.

"It's me," said Dustin "And Will isn't here."

Lucas opened the door. Dustin held up the note from Will. "Looks like he got bored or lonely while you guys were playing your couples game and decided to go out."

"What?" said Mike. "Why would he go out while we're visiting?"

"Jesus, Mike, you're oblivious!" said Dustin. "He's doing volunteer work, apparently. How long have you guys been working on this?"

"About four hours," said Lucas.

"Really? You guys just left Will alone all this time and you're surprised he didn't wait?" asked Dustin. He walked over to the table with the model. "I think I can finish this."

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When Will and Josie finished their two hour shift, they decided to go back to his house and see if his Hawkins friends were done with their couples game.

"Byers!" said Dustin happily. He ran to Will and greeted him with a huge hug.

"Good to see you, Dustin," said Will as he returned the hug. "Sorry I wasn't home when you got here."

"You were helping the needy," said Dustin. "It's what people are supposed to do around Christmas."

"Why did you just leave like that?" asked Mike as he came up the stairs followed by Lucas, El, and Max.

"I tried to ask you guys if you wanted to go, but you were still playing whatever game you were playing," said Will.

"We were working on a surprise for you, Will," said Mike. "And you just ditched us!"

"Mike!" said El.

"No, I'm tired of this. You never come to Hawkins anymore and you just run off to hang out with your new friends when we come here!"

"You left me alone for over two hours," said Will.

"It's not just tonight," said Mike. "You've moved on without us."

"I MOVED!" said Will. "Moved to a new town and made new friends. And while we're talking about moving on, I'll point out that you moved on without me before I even left Hawkins, Mike. We're not kids anymore. That's what you told me."

"Of course we're not kids anymore," said Mike. "But we're still supposed to be friends. We're supposed to make an effort. You've stopped making any kind of effort just because you haven't been getting your way!"

"Haven't been getting my way, Mike? Really? Can you think of any time I ever got my way when I lived in Hawkins? Or when I visited or you visited here? One time?"

"What about that time you dragged me and Lucas into that stupid campaign when we'd told you a million times we didn't want to play?"

Will was silent for a few moments. "I'm sorry."

"It's alright, Will," said Lucas. "Why don't you come see your present."

"No, I'm sorry I forgot my place in the party," said Will. "I'm supposed to just wait around for everyone else and be grateful to be included at all. Isn't that right?"

Mike felt the color drain from his face. He wanted to kick himself for going off on Will. He remembered the day everyone got into the station wagon to investigate the Flayed. Mike had grumbled about having to get into the back of the car and Will had simply said

'Welcome to my world.' Will was right, he had never really gotten his way as far as the party was concerned.

"Will, I'm sorry," said Mike. "I was cranky from trying to put together your present and I was just an asshole. I shouldn't have said that. Let's go see it, alright?"

Will shook his head. "You know what? Whatever it is, I don't want it."

"What? C'mon, Will," said Lucas. "We worked really hard on it, all for you."

"Yeah? Well, you made me feel like shit-like you didn't want me around," said Will.

"That's not true. Of course we want you around, we miss you," said Mike. "We were just trying to surprise you and came up with a really shitty excuse."

"Yeah, well it's pretty much been like this for the past couple of years," said Will. "You make me feel shitty, I get upset, you feel bad and apologize then we start the whole thing over again. It's wearing me out."

Will turned around and headed for the front door.

El ran over to him and grabbed his arm. "Where are you going, Will?"

"I need to get some air," said Will.

Mike remembered the day that Will had ridden off in the rain after he and Lucas had mocked Will's campaign. He remembered the sudden fear that had gripped him as he remember Will leaving his house on November 6, 1983 and not showing up at school the next day. When Mike and Lucas had reached the Byers home to find it empty, Mike had felt another wave of terror as he recalled all times Will had disappeared in 1984 because of episodes.

Mike ran to the front door and stood between Will and it. He held up his hands.

"Will, please don't leave. Let's talk about this," Mike begged.

"I don't want to talk about it right now," said Will. "I want to go for a walk. I waited for two hours while you guys had your couples game. And I've been looking forward to spending time with everyone for weeks- and whatever you were building, maybe I would have liked to help. It would have meant spending time with you, but you guys left me out of things again because you were doing things on your terms. Well, now I'm going to do things on my terms and go for a damn walk."

"You're right, Will," said Mike. "You should be able to do things on your own terms. Just... don't go out alone, please!"

"We're not kids anymore, Mike. And I'm not a baby. I used to think that you were the one person who understood that."

"I'll go with you," said Josie.

"I'll be fine, Josie," said Will.

"You're not really going to leave me alone with your Hawkins friends, are you. They seem cool and all, but I barely know them."

Will rolled his eyes. "Fine, let's go."

Mike slumped into a chair at the kitchen table as the door closed behind Will and Josie. He buried his face in his hands. El sat next to him and put her hand on his arm.

"He just needs to cool off, Mike," said El.

"Well, Dustin and Max, you were both right. We should have just had Will build the model with us. Instead we just reinforced why he never wants to visit us in Hawkins anymore," said Mike.

"We have to do something to make this up to him," said Lucas as he took a seat at the table.

"No," said Dustin. "Trying to make things up to Will is just going to push him away again. He's afraid you'll just start doing the things that make him feel left out once he's smiling again."

"How do you know that?" asked Lucas.

"Because he basically just said it, Dingus!" said Dustin. "We should try just hanging out with him."

"Yeah," said Mike. "It shouldn't be that hard unless I screw it up again."

"You won't screw it up, Mike," said El.

Mike silently prayed that she was right. There had been a large hole in his life since Will had moved. Mike had spent a lot of time wishing that he could spend more time with Will, but always seemed to screw it up when he got the chance.

Mike remembered telling Will they'd go crazy together. He had meant it. Will was the one person he could always tell anything. That had always meant the world to Mike. Then El had come into his life and she became that person... And Will eventually decided he didn't need Mike anymore and felt it was stupid to rely on him.

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"I can walk you home," said Will to Josie.

"Then what?" asked Josie. "You walk around the city and freeze to death?"

"I'm not gonna freeze to death," said Will.

"And I'm not gonna let you walk around by yourself..." Josie became quiet and stared blankly ahead for a moment.

"Josie?" She blinked and shook her head then fiddled with her silver locket.

"Sorry, my mind just went blank for a moment. Let's walk over to Ramsett Park. They have some nice lights up right now."

Will considered objecting as he didn't really want to go to a park full of lights, but he was already in a neighborhood full of lights and he decided he wasn't going to spend his life fearing things. "Yeah, let's go."

He followed Josie to a back path and stopped at the edge. "What's wrong?" asked Josie.

"There's almost no light on this path," said Will. "And those weird Zorp followers are out in this area sometimes."

"They're harmless," said Josie. "And this path is a shortcut. Where's your sense of adventure?"

"Alright, fine," said Will. He started to follow her down the path when suddenly a vine shot out, wrapped itself around Will's leg and started pulling him into the forest.

"WILL!" Josie screamed. She reacted quickly grabbed his arms.

"Josie, matches!" Will grunted. He reached over and grabbed the trunk of a small tree. Josie pulled some matches from her pocket, lit it and threw it at the vine. It released Will as he felt a familiar sensation on the back of his neck. "We have to get out of here right now!"

A vine suddenly reached out and grabbed Josie's leg. Will grabbed her arms. He would feel the anger of the Mind Flayer.

Suddenly a group of men arrived and used flame throwers on the vines. They released Josie who quickly hugged Will.

"It's alright," said and eerily calm voice. "We were never going to let those vines get you."

Will looked up to see someone he only recognized from pictures: Dr. Martin Brenner.

"What do you want?" asked Will.

"Just some help," said Brenner.

"Why would we want to help you, creep?" asked Josie.

"The diamonds cut the glass," replied Brenner calmly.

"What?" said Will. He suddenly felt Josie's arms drop from around his



neck. She stood up and stared blankly. "Josie? What did you do to her?" Will asked Brenner.

"Just put her to sleep for a little while," said Brenner. Will was suddenly seized by several strong pairs of hands. He was tied up, gagged, blindfolded, and thrown into the back of a truck.

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Hopper sat in a cell with a thick plastic door. It was much cleaner than the one he was held in while in Russia, but he still wasn't free. Across from him the demogorgan that had eaten so many of his fellow prisoners was contained. They had thrown him into the cage a couple times, but it had never touched him.

Brenner and his men arrived with a girl about the same age as El, Will, and Mike who appeared to be in a trance. Then, to his horror, Hopper realized the Will himself was with them.

Hopper ran to the plastic door and started frantically banging. "No! Not the kid!"

Will looked to the noise and his eyes widened with recognition as he saw Hopper. The men untied Will and took off the gag. "HOPPER!" Will shouted.

The men opened the door to the Demogorgan's enclosure and shoved Will inside, closing the door behind him and Hopper continued to desperately pound on the door of his cell.

The demogorgan leaped at Will, but stopped short and started to sniff him. Will backed against the wall of the cell. He wanted to run, but there was nowhere to go and he felt frozen. The demogorgan suddenly slammed Will's head into the wall and he fell to the floor unconscious.

The creature placed a clawed hand on Will's shoulder and the lights in the underground lab began to flicker rapidly as a crack formed in the wall.

"It's happening," said Brenner.

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AN: I'm going to try to make this eight chapters like a season of Stranger things. This is a different - but not completely different continuity of my pre-season 3 fics.

## 2. Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Alice

Mike rapidly tapped his foot on the floor as the group sat around the model they'd assembled for Will in the basement. They'd been debating about disassembling it and reassembling it later with Will. Dustin had suggested asking Will what he wanted.

"Something's wrong. He should be home by now. It's been over two hours," said Mike.

"Do you know Josie's number, El?" asked Max. "Maybe he's at her house."

El nodded. She stood up and walked over to the phone. She dialed Josie's number..

*"Hello?"*

"Mrs. Ambrose, it's El. Are Josie and Will there?"

*"Oh they went to see a movie. They should be back in a couple hours."*

"Okay, thank you." El hung up the phone. The others looked at her with expectation. "She said they went to see a movie."

Dustin and Lucas both breathed sighs of relief. "So he's fine," said Dustin.

"She's lying," said El.

"Why do you think she's lying?" asked Max.

"Will would have told me. He knows I'd worry."

"Maybe he forgot," said Lucas.

"He wouldn't forget. Will and I promised each other, we'd always let each other know where we go and he always keeps his promises."

Eleven thought back to the day that she and Will actually became close friends- accepted that they were siblings and not just two members of the same friend group. He was leaving the house in Hawkins carrying some empty trash bags. Eleven had asked what he was doing and he had said that he was cleaning of the litter from Castle Byers. She had begged him to let her go with him as she needed something to occupy her mind.

Will had relented, but asked her not to talk to anyone else about the clean up. El had been shocked to find it in ruins and initially thought that a storm must have done it. Then she found the pieces of the drawing of Will the Wise and the pieces of a picture of the four original party members. Will had admitted to destroying Castle Byers himself and feeling stupid for clinging to certain things for so long.

When El asked him why he had destroyed the fort, he simply replied: "*I doesn't matter.*" Then barely audibly muttered "*I don't matter.*"

Will hadn't intended for her to hear the last part, but she did hear it. Those words made her realize something about her adoptive brother. His pain from being trapped in the Upside Down, then being possessed had never stopped. He had been hiding it from everyone. D&D had been his escape, but his friends had never wanted to play anymore. Everyone, including Will, had been worried about El after the loss of her powers and the death of Hopper. No one had noticed that Will was still suffering and he hadn't wanted them to notice because he felt that his mother and El were suffering more and didn't feel like anyone would really care. El felt she should have known. She'd seen him in the Upside Down, then seen him controlled by the Mind Flayer.

El had gotten Will to open up, but he had made her promise to not tell the others. She had kept that promise, but had often wondered if she should have broken it and told Mike. Would things have been different? It hadn't gone unnoticed by El that Will seemed to shut down when they visited Hawkins. He had really looked forward to seeing Mike the first couple of times they visited Hawkins or Mike came to Pawnee, but the excitement of seeing his first ever friend seemed to shrink over time.

"Why would Josie's mom lie though?" asked Mike.

"I don't know," said El. "But I'm sure she was lying. We have to find Will."

The group headed upstairs. Joyce was sitting on the sofa messaging her feet after working a double shift. Being a manager at a clothing store paid better than being a cashier at a convenience store, but the hours were grueling close to Christmas.

"Hey there," said Joyce to the group. "Glad you all got here okay."

"Mom!" said El, who had quickly and easily started calling Joyce "Mom" after joining the Byers family.

"What is it, Sweetheart?" asked Joyce as she took El's hands. She glanced at the group. "Where's Will?"

"He went for a walk with Josie," said El. "Her mom said they went to see a movie, but she's lying, I know she is."

El's eyes suddenly widened. She felt the back of her head, then passed out. Her nose was bleeding slightly.

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Hopper desperately banged on the door of his cell. "You've made your point, Brenner! I'll do what you want, just get the kid out of there!"

"The creature isn't going to kill the boy, don't worry, chief," said Brenner.

The rapidly blinking lights caused Josie to snap out of her trance. She glanced around the room with her eyes landing on the demogorgan standing over an unconscious Will. She saw Hopper desperately banging on the cell door. She didn't know how she could do it, only that she could do it.

Josie raised her arms and screamed. Brenner and his men levitated and slammed into the walls. Josie walked past Hopper's cell and unlocked it with a wave of her arm then did the same the to demogorgan's enclosure. With another wave, she slammed the demogorgan into the wall knocking it unconscious. the gate sealed shut.

Hopper ran to Will. He was still breathing. "Are you one of Brenner's experiments?" he asked Josie.

"Brenner?" asked Josie.

"That's white haired asshole over there. How'd you do that?"

"I-I don't know," said Josie as she fiddled with her locket. "I didn't even know until now I could do that. This place feels familiar."

"We need to get out of here," said Hopper. He picked up Will, who had gotten taller in the last couple of years, but was still far from a large person.

"Do you know how to get out of here?" asked Josie.

"I know someone who does," said Hopper.

Josie followed him down a hallway. There was a woman who looked slightly younger than Hopper in a cell. She stood up and walked to the door. Hopper gave Josie a nod. Josie unlocked the door and wiped blood from her nose.

"Hopper-how?" asked the woman. She looked at Josie and her eyes flickered with recognition.

"You alright, Alice?" asked Hopper. Alice nodded.

"This girl here knocked out Brenner and his men. We have a small window to get out of here. Do you think you can find Sarah and get us all out?" asked Hopper.

"Yes," said Alice. She walked over to an outlet and punched it. She seemed to be having a seizure for a moment, then gestured for the others to follow. She led them to another cell and opened it. Josie saw a girl about her age who seemed very familiar.

"Sarah, c'mon, honey, we're getting out of here," said Hopper as he walked over to her. He gently set Will down. Sarah shook her head frantically.

"I can't, Dad, I can't. There's too much stuff out there."

"I know, but I can help you get through it. We have to get out of here so that bastard can't use us anymore."

Josie walked over to Sarah and held out her hand. "C'mon, we have to hurry. Your dad's right. I don't know who that guy is, but I don't want to help him with whatever he wants."

Sarah looked up at Josie and took her hand and stood up as Hopper picked up Will. Sarah suddenly gasped and leaned against the wall.

"You disobeyed him and escaped," said Sarah. "He punished you, tortured you, he changed your memories."

"Changed my memories?" asked Josie.

We have to move now," said Alice. "I can explain everything when we're somewhere safe. She led them into what felt like a maze of air ducts. After about 20 minutes, Will groaned.

"Hang on a second," said Hopper to the others. He set Will down, but supported his head. Will opened his eyes.

"Hopper?"

"Hey, buddy," said Hopper with a smile. "Good to see you."

Will sat up and hugged Hopper. "We thought you were dead! Have you been a prisoner this whole time?"

"Yeah, it was the Russians working with Brenner that found me after I got knocked out."

"What do they want with you?" asked Josie. "You were saying you'd do what they asked if they let Will go."

Hopper cleared his throat and shifted uncomfortably.

"They wanted him to father children... more test subjects," said Alice as she ran her hand over a shaved head.

"What?" said Will. "Why?"

"They think I'll have more kids like Sarah," said Hopper as he gestured to his daughter.

"Sarah?" said Will as he looked past Hopper to Sarah. "Did they fake her death too?"

"Yeah, they like to do that," said Hopper.

"Brenner was running a lot of tests on people whether they knew it or now during the Vietnam War. Hopper here, didn't know and doesn't remember. I volunteered with three other people and we had no idea. He made me his prisoner. He must have messed with your memory somehow," said Alice as she pointed at Josie.

"He said something that put her in a trance," said Will.

"Sleeper agent," said Alice. "He must have put her there to spy on you." Alice pointed at Will.

"But Will's my friend," said Josie. "I'm not spying on him."

"Not by choice," said Alice. "Brenner uses a lot of people. You were one of the children he tested on and he erased your memories of that."

"Okay, I'm starting to freak out here," said Josie. She fiddled with her locket and her eyes briefly unfocused.

"Josie, your locket," said Will. "Take it off!"

"What?" said Josie.

"That's how he's controlling you," said Will.

Josie considered Will carefully, then yanked her locket off her neck, stood up, dropped it on the floor, and stomped on it. It let out some sort of high pitched noise. Will stood up and grabbed his head to steady himself.

"Whoa, easy there," said Hopper as he stood up and took Will's arm.

"We have to get out of here," said Will. "They may have been tracking



us with that locket."

"You guys go, I'll hold them off," said Josie.

"What?" said Will.

"If that psycho has been using me to spy on you, I'm a danger to you."

Hopper let go of Will's arm and stepped back next to Josie. "Alice, get Will and Sarah to safety."

"What? Hopper, no!" said Will. "We've all thought you were dead for over a year. My mom, El, they need you."

"I can't be sure that Brenner hasn't been messin' with my head, kid," said Hopper. "I'm not going to risk putting you in danger."

"Well, I'm not leaving either of you behind. For all we know \*I\* could be some sort of sleeper agent. It's happened before. So you're both coming with me or I'll stay right here. We can even wait to contact my family until we're sure Brenner isn't using mind control on any of us if you want," said Will.

"Hopper, it's safe," said Alice. "Let's get out of here so he can't use us anymore."

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"No one's seen him at the monoplex," said Jonathan as he got home with Nancy, Steve, and Robin.

"Josie's mother still swears they went there," said Nancy.

El stirred at that moment. "El," said Mike as he gently tapped her shoulder.

"Will," she whispered. Mike felt a small twinge of jealousy for a brief moment- toward both Will and El. They had each other away from Hawkins while Mike himself was stuck in Hawkins without Will's friendship or romance with El.

"Did you see him?" asked Mike. Joyce walked up behind him.

"Are you okay, Sweetheart?"

"Will, he hit his head. Something knocked him out," said El.

"Something?" asked Max.

El looked around at everyone. "D-demogorgan."

"What? Are you sure?" asked Lucas. El got up and walked over to the radio. She turned it on and changed the station to static.

"El, what are you doing?" asked Mike. "Your powers."

"I saw Will," she replied. "I feel my powers. I have to try. She grabbed a scarf and tied it around her head. She focused as hard as she could and nothing happened. Then suddenly, she felt a bubble form and burst inside of her nose.

She was in the void. She saw Will telling people he wasn't going to leave them behind.

"El?" said Mike. "Do you see him?" El held up her hand.

Josie was with Will. A woman with a shaved head named Alice was with him. Someone else was with him... but it couldn't be. Hopper-Dad?

*"You look like your mother," said Alice to Josie. "Your father too... I can see him in you too."*

*"You know my parents?" asked Josie. "The Ambroses?"*

*"Ambrose? No, that's the fake memory Brenner put in your mind. He sent your father to the war and to his death so he could steal you from your mother."*

"Papa," said El. She pulled off her scarf as she started gasping for breath.

"Papa?" asked Joyce. "Brenner? Does he have Will."

"Will was escaping with Josie and three other people," said El. "They

talked about Papa. A woman told Josie that Papa changed her memories... that the Ambrose's aren't her parents."

"That's why Mrs. Ambrose lied about them going to the movies," said Dustin. "She has to be in on whatever this is."

Joyce grabbed her coat and headed to the door.

"Mom, where are you going?" asked Jonathan.

"I'm going to have a talk with that bitch and find out where your brother is," said Joyce.

"You can't go by yourself, if the Ambrose's are working with Brenner they're dangerous. We should contact Owens before we go."

"We should probably take some supplies with us. Where's your gun?" asked Nancy.

"Okay, this got insane real fast," said Steve.

"We should all go," said Lucas.

"No," said Joyce. "Anyone under 18 is staying here."

"We can help," said Mike.

"Mike, just stay here," said Nancy as Joyce dialed Dr. Owen's number on the phone.

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"I can hot wire this," said Alice as she examined the car the group found a couple miles outside of the underground facility they'd escaped. "Looks that this broke down and the owner must have gone for help."

Will leaned against the car to catch his breath. "We'd better keep you moving, kid," said Hopper. "You probably have a concussion."

Will had a strong urge to just crawl into the back seat of the car and go to sleep, but he knew Hopper was right. Hopper took his arm to

help him walk. Sarah took his other arm and walked with them for a few minutes before suddenly backing away. She stared at him, her eyes were wide with fear.

"Are you okay?" asked Will.

"You.. you were trapped in that place.. for days... And he... he tried to make you part of his army... the giant spider," said Sarah.

"You saw that?" asked Will. Sarah nodded.

"It's okay, Sarah, I got this," said Hopper. "Go ahead and rest inside the car. We'll be somewhere safe soon." Sarah complied as Josie walked over to Alice.

"There's something I need to tell you, Will," said Hopper as he and Will began to circle the car. "You and El and your Mom and brother."

"What is it?" asked Will. "Is something wrong?"

"No, nothing more than the usual," said Hopper. "I just found some stuff out while I was held prisoner and I need you to remind me to tell everyone when we're all together."

"Got it," said Alice as the engine fired up. "Let's get going."

Hopper led Will to the car and helped him into the back seat with Josie and Sarah. "Keep him awake," he said to the girls. "Let's drive a while and find a pay phone," Hopper added to Alice.

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"Hey Maggie," said Joyce as Mrs. Ambrose opened the door. "Will and Josie haven't been to the monoplex." Joyce grabbed her shirt collar and shoved her against the wall. "So I'm going to give you one more chance to tell the truth, where is my son?"

"Hey, Joyce, take it easy," said Mrs. Ambrose. "If your son's missing, then so is my daughter."

"But Josie isn't your daughter, is she?" said Joyce. Mrs. Ambrose started to laugh.

"Of course that little shit isn't my daughter, she doesn't even look like me."

"You should back away from her right now, Mrs. Byers," said Kevin-the boy everyone thought was Josie's older brother. He was pointing a gun at Joyce and the man everyone thought was Josie's father stood next to him also pointing a gun at Joyce.

"You two should watch where you're pointing those things," said Steve as he and Jonathan stepped into the house pointing guns at the two supposed Ambrose men.

"Wow, you Hawkins people are tenacious, I'll give you that," said Mr. Ambrose. "Tenacious and stupid." He shot both Steve and Jonathan in their legs. Nancy and Robin suddenly charged both men, knocking them to the ground, grabbing their guns and pointing the weapons at their heads.

"Did we just do that?" asked Robin. "Because I think I peed a little."

"EVERYONE FREEZE!" a small group of soldiers entered the house. Joyce was paralyzed with fear until she looked up and saw Dr. Owens.

"I see you didn't wait like we asked," said Dr. Owens.

"My boy is in danger and you were taking too long," said Joyce.

"Sorry we took so long, but we were distracted because we found Will," said Dr. Owens.

"Is he alright?" asked Joyce.

"He has a concussion, but he'll be fine," said Dr. Owens as soldiers arrested the Ambroses and medics attended to Jonathan and Steve. Dr. Owens walked up to Joyce and lowered his voice. "Will and his friend Josie weren't alone, three other people escaped Brenner with them... Joyce, one of them was Jim Hopper. He's alive."

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Okay, this is chapter 2. This story has nothing to do with How Do We

Fix This? I may do a couple more chapters on that one too, not sure. I still have to finish "Breaking Through the Portal" and "Beyond the Ripple" the continuations of the MKUltra Ripple stories- which are now AU.

### **3. Chapter 3 You Won't Care When I'm Happy**

#### **Chapter 3 You Won't Care When I'm Happy Again**

"Sorry, Buddy, we gotta keep you awake," said Hopper as he nudged Will who was starting the drift off. "C'mon, let's get you on your feet."

Will gave a small grunt and stood up before Hopper could help him. Hopper nonetheless, took Will's arm and started walking him back and forth in the small room they occupied with Sarah, Alice, and Josie.

"I'm feeling really cranky right now, everyone," said Will. "Sorry if I lose my temper. I just really want to sleep."

"Don't worry about it, kid," said Hopper. "You're in for a long 24 hours, but I'm going to make sure you get through it. Especially since your Mom's on the way. I wouldn't want to get on her bad side."

"You can't get on her bad side, Hopper," said Will. "She'll be happy to see you."

"Not if I let you fall asleep while you've got that concussion. You've never been on her bad side and you'll never be there, Will. Anyone who messes with you is going to know what a formidable force your mother really is before they know what hit them."

Will smiled a little. Growing up, he had always felt like the odd one out of the party because his mother couldn't afford all the nice things that Mike, Lucas, and Dustin's parents got for them; but he always felt like he had the best mother of the group.

As Will and Hopper passed Sarah, she recoiled a little.

"Sorry," said Sara. "It isn't you. I just- I can't control my visions yet and that stuff that happened to you-

"Don't worry about it," said Will. "I understand. It's not your fault." Sarah certainly wasn't the same as the people in Hawkins who stared at him when he walked down the halls at school.

"So who is my mother," Josie asked Alice.

"Someone who worked with me to try and stop Brenner once we found out what he was really up to," said Alice.

"Where is she now? Is she still alive? does she know about me?"

"She knows about you," said Alice. Will thought he saw Hopper looking a little anxious from the corner of his eye.

"Has she tried to find me?"

"Oh, she found you," said Alice. "Brenner just fried her brain before she could get out of the lab."

Hopper stopped. "Wait, is Josie here the real Jane Ives?" he asked Alice. She nodded.

"What?" said Will. "El isn't Jane?"

"No," said Hopper. "Brenner told me- more like he taunted me. That's what I wanted to talk to you and your fam-"

The door in the room burst open and Will's family and Hawkins friends poured in. They all stared in awe at Hopper. He met Joyce's eyes. She looked torn between running to him and running to her youngest child.

She didn't know yet, but Hopper knew he'd have to tell her-tell them all- soon. El made Joyce's decision for her when she broke from the group and ran to Hopper. The girl was crying tears of shock and joy. Will stepped out of Hopper's grip to allow him to fully embrace El. As he did, he was quickly engulfed in a hug by his mother and brother.



"Are you alright, Baby?" asked Joyce. "Dr. Owens said you have a concussion. How do you feel?"

"I'm just tired and my head's sore, Mom," said Will. "But that doesn't matter right now. Brenner... He's working with the Russians, they have a demogorgan and they're trying open a new gate."

"We know," said Joyce. "But try not to worry about that right now. You need to heal."

"Mom, I felt it.. I felt him trying to come out and wanting to kill everyone... or at least control us."

"C-control us?" asked El. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know," said Will. "But we have to do something."

"We're working on that, Will," said Dr. Owens. "Right now, you have to work on staying awake for the next 20 hours then getting some rest."

"We can't wait for me to get rest," said Will. "We have to do something now!"

"Will," said Joyce as she gently, but firmly held his face. "We're all going to do something, I promise, but please focus on healing that concussion. *Please!*"

"I can have some doctors stay with him to make sure he doesn't fall asleep," said Dr. Owens.

"Thanks," said Joyce. "But I can handle it."

"We can all handle it," said Dustin.

"You should probably do it in two hour shifts," said Dr. Owens. "You'll need to be well rested and fully alert."

Dr. Owens warned everyone that Will would probably get irritable as he was very tired and fresh off of yet another traumatic experience. Joyce and Jonathan took the first shift while everyone else rested. Hopper sat with Sarah as she finally fell asleep. Alice and

Josie (the real Jane Ives) rested in another room. Hopper made up his mind to wait until after Will got some sleep before telling the Byers family the full truth.

After her two hour shift with Will, Joyce entered Hopper's room.

"Can't sleep?" asked Hopper.

"Obviously you can't either," said Joyce with a small smile. There was an awkward silence before Joyce crossed the room and embraced Hopper. He returned her embrace full force.

"I thought I'd killed you!" Joyce sobbed.

"It wasn't you," said Hopper. "It was those bastards who stole all those kids and opened the damn gate. They caused everything that's happened to us and our kids."

Joyce glanced at Sarah asleep in the bed. Brenner had faked her death just as he had faked Will's. He must have intended to get Will from the Upside Down and keep him as a guinea pig as well. Joyce remembered Will contacting her while he was trapped there. The Mind Flayer had used him and now the demogorgan had somehow been able to re-open the gate by touching Will.

"What are you and Sarah going to do now?"

"I don't know," said Hopper. "I just want to keep her safe."

"Do you want to go back to Hawkins?"

"Not especially."

Joyce pulled back from Hopper and looked him in the eyes. "Then stay with me...stay with my family. El's already there anyway." Joyce thought she saw something odd flash in Hopper's eyes- like he had something important to tell her. "We can only trust each other to protect our kids and we'll be stronger together."

Hopper smiled. "That's true. We never did get that date... What do you say? Enzo's at 7?"

"I think we should try a different place," said Joyce with a small laugh. "We haven't had much luck there."

"Deal," said Hopper.

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Eleven briefly peaked inside Sarah's room to see Joyce and Hopper in a private conversation after she and Max sat with Will. She decided to let them talk longer in the hopes that they would stay together and she'd have both of them with her.

She made up her mind to find a room to see if more of her powers had returned. She hadn't wanted to leave Will because he seemed upset while trying to hide it, but Dr. Owens had insisted on shifts.

El peaked into the room where Alice was talking to Josie-or the real Jane Ives as it turned out. Will had told her. El decided to let them talk alone.

*"I need to tell you something, El," said Will.*

*"Do you want me to leave?" asked Max.*

*"It's up to El," said Will.*

*"Max can stay," said El. "What is it, Will?"*

*Will took a deep breath. "You aren't really Jane Ives, Josie is."*

*"What?" Max exclaimed. "Are you sure?"*

*"Yeah, apparently Brenner has taunted Hopper with that information and Alice confirmed it. She tried to take down the lab with Terry Ives."*

*"If Josie is the real Jane, then who am I?" asked El.*

*"I don't know," said Will. "But I think Hopper might. He said he wanted to tell us all something."*

Eleven was tempted to go into the room where Hopper was talking to Joyce and ask him, but she felt scare. She found an empty room with

a radio and tied a bandana around her head. She couldn't decide who she wanted to find.

Max entered the room. "Maybe you should rest before you try to use your powers again. Oh crap, I'm starting to agree with Mike."

El smiled a little and pulled the cloth off of her eyes. "You're probably right, I feel frazzled right now."

"Yeah, well, a lot has happened," said Max.

"I'm not who I thought I was," said El.

"You're still the same person, El," said Max. "You just have a different birth mom than you've always though you've had. You still have the same family. And now the man who became your father is alive."

"And he loves the woman who became my mom," said El.

"See?" said Max. "You family is coming together."

"Yeah, coming together," said El. "I have to help them, I have to help Will. He's been trying to help me, but he needs help."

"Of course he needs help," said Max. "A bunch of evil scientists and an extra dimensional monster just used him to try and open the gate."

"Not just that," said El. "Will thinks he doesn't matter."

"What do you mean?" asked Max.

"He made me promise not to tell," said El. "But I know he still thinks it. He doesn't like to go to Hawkins because he thinks no one really wants to see him.. that they don't miss him."

"That isn't true," said Max. "But I can't blame him for feeling that way."

Mike happened to be looking for El at that moment. He overheard the conversation and decided to volunteer for the last shift of sitting with Will- and he decided he would take his shift alone.

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"This'll all be over soon, Will," said Lucas as he and Dustin sat with Will. "You can go home and see the present we made you."

Will leaned against the wall and folded his arms over his chest. "I meant it when I said I didn't want it."

Lucas glanced at Dustin. "Look, it's a model of Minas Tirith. We've been planning it for months."

"Sounds cool," said Will as he stared out the window. "But I still don't want it."

"We built it for you," said Lucas desperately.

"You built it *without* me," said Will. "I'm sorry you worked so hard, but I'm not going to change my mind." Will was determined to not let his friends talk him into something he had made clear he didn't want again because he knew that if he accepted the gift, it would just start the whole cycle all over.

Dustin and Lucas muttered to Mike that Will wasn't in the greatest mood as they passed him in the hall on their way out.

When Mike entered the room, he watched Will pacing back and forth (and refused Mike's help a couple times) for about a half hour before he decided to speak.

"You're really just going to give me the silent treatment?" asked Mike. "Do you hate me that much?" Mike didn't actually think that Will hated him, but he had to goad him into talking somehow.

Will stopped and stared at Mike for a moment before shaking his head and continuing to pace. "You know I don't hate you, Mike, I'm just not in the mood to talk."

That was about 12 words. It was a start. Mike felt the pieces of the picture and drawing in his pocket. He always kept them with him when he visited Will, but never have the nerve to bring it up. He made up his mind at that moment, stepped in front of Will and held them in his hand.

Will looked confused for a moment before recognition dawned on his face. "Is that why you always get so easily pissed at me whenever we visit?"

"I don't-" Mike started. "Look, what happened that day Lucas and I found you at Castle Byers?"

"Doesn't matter," said Will. "And I'm not talking about it with you."

"It *does* matter," said Mike. "And why won't you talk about it with me? You used to talk to me about these things. You still can, I'm here for you."

"I used to think you actually cared," Will shot back.

"I did care!" said Mike defensively. "I do care! Crazy together, remember?"

Mike put his hand on Will's arm, but the other boy stepped out of his reach and glared at him.

"I remember you saying that, Mike. But everything you said that week was either a lie or just wrong!"

"What? It wasn't a lie. How can you think that?"

"Because I lived it, Mike. You needed a distraction from missing El and I provided it."

"Will, you're my best friend, you weren't just a distraction. You have to know that. What did I lie about that week? How was I wrong?"

"I was afraid the Mind Flayer would spy back and you said we wouldn't let it. Only it did. It took complete control of me and killed a bunch of people. I kept having nightmares about it for months. I still do sometimes."

"Why didn't you say anything?" asked Mike.

"I tried," said Will as tears formed in his eyes. "You never wanted to listen. Do you have any idea what it was like hearing you tell me that asking me to be your friend was the best thing you'd ever done and

then after I was free from the Mind Flayer and El had closed the gate, you barely wanted to talk to me? I know you were happy to have El back and all, but you made me feel like I didn't belong in the same room with you. I tried to talk to you about things several times, but you made it clear you didn't want to listen. So I finally realized it was pointless and just stopped trying."

"Will, I'm sorry. I mean, you seemed happy when you got back from the cabin. I thought you were okay."

"Of course I wasn't okay. I had been used by an evil entity that was trying to kill everyone."

"We can talk about it now," said Mike.

"I don't want to talk about it with you anymore," said Will. "You won't care about me when I'm smiling again."

"How can you say that?" asked Mike. "After everything we've been through together, how can you say that?"

"How can I not say that?" asked Will. He started to pace again and Mike grabbed his arm. WHAM!

It happened before either of them realized it. Will's fist collided with Mike's face. The taller boy stumbled backward and fell to the floor. Mike's nose was bleeding. Will stared in horror at what he had done.

"Shit! Shit! Shit! I'm sorry, Mike, I'm sorry," said Will as he started trembling and walking backward until he was at the wall. He slid down until he was sitting on the floor. His hands were folded in front of his face and he was hyperventilating into them.

Mike stared in shock. Will had never been a violent person.

Hopper was suddenly at Mike's side asking him if he was okay. Mike simply nodded. He saw Mrs. Byers kneeling beside Will. She pulled him into a hug and pulled a syringe out of her pocket and injected it into her younger son. Will was unconscious as his mother held him and El and Jonathan joined her.

"Let's make sure that nose of yours isn't broken," said Hopper to Mike

as he helped him to his feet. El looked like she was about to follow, but Hopper held out his hand. "I'll take care of Mike. You just stay with your mother and brothers, kid."

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Sorry about the long time between updates, I've been buying a house and moving and also working long hours the last couple months. It'll probably be December before I update any of my fics again because I'm going to try the NaNoWriMo challenge.